

Well, hi Kelley, Malcolm, Todd, Steve, Tom, Karen...

Here we are at the third part of Season of Mists. We last saw the Sandman watching Lucifer walking away into the mists, having been given the key to Hell. This episode begins a few hours later.

Now, the last issue was pretty low on characters - it was basically just Lucifer and the Sandman, with a couple of cameos. This issue has a cast of thousands. Well, hundreds. Well, lots.

We've got Odin and Loki and Thor. I've done sketches of Odin and Loki, basing them on the Norse myths. What is strange about Odin is how much he looks like Lee Van Cleef, only taller and paler: Floppy wide awake hat, short gray beard, one eye (the missing eye shadowed by the hat brim), thin face, scraggly gray hair at the back; he wears a long gray cloak that covers most of him: two ghostly wolves pad around his feet, two spectral ravens hover on each shoulder.

Loki's a fire god, eyes wide and huge and slanting up, inhumanly, lips crooked and scarred from where they were once sewn together.

Thor is huge and has a tangled red beard, wide, bulging eyes, long red tangled unkempt hair, and a small piece of rock embedded in his forehead.

We'll have a Lord of Order (a cardboard box) and a Lord of Chaos (Probably a little girl in a clown suit, but I haven't made up My mind yet).

We'll have demons (led by Azazel); we'll have gods from some other pantheons (Egyptian, maybe Japanese). We'll have a small Contingent of Faerie P their interest is in not allowing anyone to take Hell (to which they tithe) to be re-opened.

This is all going to make it something of a nightmare, I'm afraid, in terms of how many people there will be running through this.

I think all we will do in this issue is set up the problem. Then we'll mention that, on Earth, the dead are coming back.

[Section discussing next few issues cut here. ng]

Bugger. I've just spent half a day trying to plan out this issue, And I can't get it to fly, so I'll just start writing and see where it takes me...It's a bit like jumping out of a plane and hoping you'll find a parachute on the way down....

(Later: well, I've just thrown away three pages of a first draft And two pages of the second. Let's see how well this version works...)

Page 1 panel 1

A long panel down the left-hand side of the page. Okay, Kelley, now get whatever reference you think you'll need for this - it's as if we're in ninth century Norway, or at least, the ninth century Norwegian idea of what a great palace would be. So the hall is built of woven rushes - no windows, smoky. Forget all the Kirbyish SF stuff: this is dirty and primitive and old-fashioned: almost no metals, just wood and stuff. The floor is mud, strewn with rushes. Odin sits in his chair. At his feet sit two huge gray wolves, sprawled one on each side of him, huge green wolf eyes staring straight at us. Odin sits on a huge wooden chair, sitting staring at us through his one good eye. He is bare-headed. He has gray hair, thinning, shoulder-length, and a short gray beard-and-moustache. In his left hand he holds a goblet - made of gold, ornamented with jewels. The room is dark and gloomy and muddy. Odin wears a simple leather jerkin; it goes down to his knees and is drawn in at the waist by a heavy leather belt; his legs are covered by cloth leggings, crisscrossed by leather thongs running all the way up his legs. (Check out any good reference on the Vikings.) Odin's face is long and thin and drawn. He doesn't look like a nice man - he looks dangerous,

Like an aging hired killer, his one good eye cruel and nasty. You may want to keep his face fairly shadowy here, so that all we can see is one glowing eye. Steve - get as far from the brightly coloured Kirby Asgard as you can here: this is the Asgard of the Old Norse, a bitter, dangerous place, in which all is dull gray and brown, alleviated occasionally by a glint of gold. Odin's right eye is missing - the eye on the left-hand side of his head, as we look at it.

Cap (Todd pick a lettering style - something nice and Copperplate, like your 'To be Continued' style, for the 'Location' captions in this issue): Asgard.

Cap (normal): in the High Hall of Gladsheim the Lord of the Aesir sits and waits for thought and memory to return to him.

Cap: at his feet two wolves attend him.

Cap: lacking thought and memory, he could not even name them. The floor of the high hall is mud, scattered with rushes.

Cap: he sits and waits, the gallows-god, the one-eyed king of Asgard.

Page 1 panel 2

Do these panels on the right-hand side of the page, one beneath the next. Okay - a head and shoulders shot of Odin. He's looking straight out at us: on each side of him, two huge ravens fluttering down toward him. Now, Odin's ravens should be done on overlay, Kelley, so they're printed in gray: they're transparent - you can see through both of them, as they flutter down - one toward one shoulder, one to the other. We can probably see more of Odin's face here.

Cap: there is a fluttering of wings.

Cap: the ghost-birds return to his shoulder.

Page 1 panel 3

Now we move in for a close-up on Odin's face - he's off at an angle, looking off to the side. He's smiling, a thin and chilly smile, not friendly, more to do with what he's thinking about than with anything funny. Possibly we can see a ragged gray transparent raven on his shoulder next to us, whispering into his ear. He's holding the goblet.

Cap: and instantly he knows; he knows all they've seen.

Cap: Huginn and Muninn: thought and memory.

Cap: and he smiles, the lord of the gallows.

Odin: at last...

Page 1 panel 4

Odin is now in profile, his face facing the right of panel, so His blind eye is the only one that we can see: he's drinking from the jeweled goblet we saw earlier - possibly a trickle of the wine is dripping into his beard or out of his mouth. I do not believe the Norse were particularly fastidious eaters. Incidentally, Odin doesn't have an eye-patch: what he has is a scarred hole in his head, where an eye used to be. You may want to check this out medically to find out what an eye scar looks like. When he stands up he's about 6' 5".

Cap: the mead he drinks is not the mead of the Aesir. It is his mead, brewed by dwarfs from dead Kvasir's blood; a draught of liquid verse and madness.

Cap: it is the mead of Odin, the all-father, and none but Odin may drink of it.

Page 1 panel 5

Pull back. Odin has stood up and with one hand he is pulling on an old cloak - nothing fancy, an old gray cloak that covers his whole body. The two ravens have faded away completely now, or, if you do them, are just the faintest of light gray impressions, on overlay. He has turned away from us. He has put the goblet down on a table. He is holding a large floppy, wide-brimmed hat, like the shadow's, or like a battered old cowboy hat, only less impressive than either. He is fading away, feet first, so from about half-way down he's almost transparent.

Cap: he drains the goblet. And he is gone.

Page 2 panel 1

Over the page, now. Okay - same panel grid breakdown. A long panel down the left of the page, and four equal-sized panels going down on the right. Black panel gutters. This panel is a long shot (but it might just work. Sorry.) - we're looking at an underground cavern; our vantage point is probably somewhere near the ceiling, because at the very top of the panel is a huge snake (huge in real terms, tiny in panel terms) curled around and intertwining into a stalactite. In the middle of the panel we can see some kind of underground cliff or rock formation like a jagged hill. At the bottom of the panel a naked man is bound to a huge rock slab: he's bound with intestines, looped around his neck, his waist, his legs, and his spread-eagled arms. Next to him stands a woman, holding a metal bowl in her outstretched arms. The bowl is few feet above his face. Tiny drops of liquid fall from the snake's mouth, white against the dark background, fall the hundred feet or so into the bowl (the bottom of the panel is a long way from the top of the panel), and these figures are really small.

Cap: there is a cavern beneath the world.

Cap: (this is true. You must know in your bones that this is true, although all logic argues against it.)

Cap: there is a cavern beneath the world, and in that cavern a man is bound.

Cap: in the cavern there is also a woman, and a snake.

Page 2 panel 2

Next vertical tier is divided into four horizontal panels. This one shows the snake's head: it's an evil-looking snake, of no known breed on earth, but something like a pit viper a big, triangular head, mean little snake eyes staring, fangs extended, tongue flickering. green poison drips from its mouth. Maybe you could use that technique Sam Keith does so well, of using white- out to cross-hatch the scales. Basically, a nightmare snake's head. Any reader who's scared of snakes will get bad dreams for a week...

Cap: the snake is high in the darkness of the cavern, curled around an elaborate rock formation.

Cap: the woman is called Sigyn.

Cap: the snake has no name.

Page 2 panel 3

Now we're looking at the woman. She has lank hair that may once have been yellow, she's thin to the point of emaciation, to the point where you can almost see the skull beneath the skin. She's like a famine poster sunken cheeks and matchstick arms, huge dark circles beneath her eyes. She's holding at arms' length a large metal bowl, and is staring intently at it. In the centre of the bowl, which is almost full, ripples emanate from the place where the serpent's venom is falling.

Cap: the woman holds a bowl above the man's head.

Cap: (drip. drip.)

Cap: the snake's venom drips from its open mouth. It falls into the bowl.

Page 2 panel 4

Move in for a close-up of the bowl P we can see her fingers on each side of it; we can see the reflection of her face in the greenish poison, crisscrossed and distorted by the ripples.

Cap: the man is bound with the entrails of his son.

Cap: (their son.)

Cap: (the woman is his wife.)

Page 2 panel 5

We are looking at Sigyn, the woman. She's a little way away from us, in profile, standing on the edge of a crevasse in this underground place: perhaps stalagmites rise from the ground. She's tipping the contents of the heavy metal bowl into the pit. The liquid falls, and steams as it falls. She looks very exhausted.

Cap: the bowl fills gradually. When it is full, the woman empties it into a pit.

Page 3 panel 1

Okay, Kelley. now go to a four panel grid, four equal rectangular panels (the middle lines on the page should be the same as the last page, since both page designs are variants on the 8 panel grid). Suddenly the panels are bigger, and we're looking at the man, Loki, bound to the rock with these frozen entrails which do indeed look like human entrails. He's thrown his head back in pain, trying to avoid the falling poison, which is falling accurately onto his face basically aiming for the point at the bridge of his nose equidistant between both eyes. We can't see his face properly here. We can see that his body is naked, and in good shape. He's also fairly tall and well-proportioned. He's obviously in agony.

Cap: whilst she is gone, the snake's venom drips onto the man's face.

Cap: he twists and writhes as the poison eats into his flesh. He screams as it enters his eyes.

Page 3 panel 2

Okay move in for a close-up on his face here. It's our first chance to see Loki's face properly, although it's all scrunched up in pain. The poison is dripping onto his face from above, possibly even smoking slightly where it hits. He's obviously screaming his lungs out, although we can't hear him. We are close enough to see the regular scars about half an inch out from his lips the holes that were bored in his lips by a dwarf (who used an awl, and sewed Loki's lips together with leather thongs) his lips are crooked and scarred. He's thin-faced, and his huge, slanting eyes are closed. I tend to imagine this as a sort of Ted McKeeverish sort of shot that dirty, acid-burned, painful feeling he's so good at getting across. I'll describe Loki more fully later (and, indeed, send you a drawing of him and of Odin, the way I see them).

Cap: when he writhes, the earth quakes.

Page 3 panel 3

Now we're a few feet above them, looking down at them. Sigyn stands next to him: her bowl is held up. It's empty and a drop or two of the venom is falling into the empty metal bowl, there in this dark cavern at the bottom of the world, in the darkness, and the venom is splashing up. Loki's head is beneath the bowl we can see he's opened his eyes, and is shouting at his wife. He looks mad.

Cap: he curses the woman, but still she stays with him.

Cap: the man. The woman. The snake. The bowl.

Page 3 panel 4

Okay now pull back a way. You remember the hill thing I was talking about in the first panel on page 2? well, Odin is now standing on there, facing us, in his cloak and his broad brimmed hat, holding a long staff. Small. far below him we can see Loki and Sigyn and her bowl these tiny, pitiful figures.

Cap: it's not nice, or pretty; but it's true.

Cap: and it's necessary.

Cap: it has been going on for a very long time.

Page 4 panel 1

Over the page. Okay, now let's keep on with the basic 8 panel grid. This page is the same as the one we had in the last issue, when we met Breschau, i.e.: first panel we've closed in on Odin from the last panel. He's standing on this peak of rock in the cavern. He's leaning on his tall wooden staff, and the hat shades his eyes eye rather and the cloak covers him. He looks like a tall, cruel, Lee Van Cleef playing a one-eyed aging hired killer. He's opened his mouth and he's saying:

Odin: Enough. Snake, hold your venom.

Page 4 panel 2

The snake has wound itself back up onto its stalactite. It's closed its mouth, and, although its tongue flickers between its lips (do snakes have lips? well, you know what I mean) it's not dripping poison any more. It's in slightly longer shot than it was the last time we saw it we can see more snake.

No dialogue.

Page 4 panel 3

Loki's head, in profile, laying on his back, so his face is facing the top of the panel: he's pulling himself together. He's sweating, but he's opened his eyes huge and inhuman eyes, with slitted, cat-like pupils, and he's talking his ruined lips opened on these perfect teeth. Actually he shouldn't be just laying back: despite the intestines looped around his neck he's pulled his head upwards slightly.

Loki: why...why have you come here...glad-of-war? to gloat at my...misfortune?

Loki: to...pass the time...?

Page 4 panel 4

Okay: We're now looking at Odin, in fairly tight close-up: the hat throws a shadow over his eyes: the eye that's there blazes from the shadow, the other is gone. He's looking at us like Clint Eastwood in a bad mood. He's talking but his lips are only slightly parted.

Odin: No, Loki sky-walker. I have come to talk with you.

Page 4 panel 5

We're looking at Loki from above, so it's a close up of his face in full-face. He's now half-smiling, his eyes wide-open, his mouth wide with this crooked smile, this pattern of join-the-dots scars around his lips, beads of sweat on his forehead.

Loki: And what makes you think I...have anything to say to you? Eh, blood- brother ...Or have you forgotten that we mingled our blood? That you swore...on Ymir's bones...that we two were one for ever?

Page 4 panel 6

Larger panel. Odin has come down from the cliff-top, and is standing next to Loki. Sigyn isn't in this panel.

Odin: Loki wolf-father...If there had been any other way, do you not think I would have taken it? But, free, you would be dangerous to all of us. You are too clever, too wily, and too malevolent to be unconfined.

Loki: if I am so clever...Why am I still...bound here?...eh, blood-brother?

Odin: Ragnarok has not yet come, Loki.

Page 5 panel 1

Okay. now this is just a normal 8 panel page, although the last panel should be left double size, as with the previous page, giving us seven panels in all. first panel this is an extreme close-up on Odin's eyes: or rather, eye it stares at us out of the darkness, on the right of the panel, making us feel rather uncomfortable because there ought to be another one like it on the other side of the panel. But there isn't. What there is is lots of space for Todd to squish in the lettering because I'm going to have to overload this page in order to be able to get to the Sandman by page 6.

Odin: it has been said: "that Loki will be bound until Ragnarok, when the Fimbulwinter will freeze the world, when great wolves will eat the sun and the moon, when the giants will ride to war on a ship made of dead men's nails..."

Page 5 panel 2

At the bottom of the panel, Odin is crouching next to Loki, his Staff sticking up in the air. These two figures, probably in silhouette maybe just the two heads.

Loki: "and on that day Loki will break his bonds and fight Heimdall, and they both will die." I know the old Tales as well as you, gallows-god. So?

Odin: it need not happen, Loki.

Page 5 panel 3

We're looking at the snake up in the roof of the cavern. It's staring down at us with its bright little eyes; the most poisonous creature in the whole of creation. The word balloons come up from below, arrows pointing to the bottom of the panel.

Odin (off): perhaps Asgard will be destroyed. But we can be gone.

Loki (off): go? Go where? To Jotunheim, where the giants Live? To Svartalfheim, where the dark-elves hide? To Nidavellir, where the dwarfs toil? All those places will fall as Asgard falls.

Page 5 panel 4

We're looking at Sigyn, Loki's wife. She's just standing, Listening to all this, her thin face blank, her eyes pits in her head, holding this metal bowl limply, devoid of function for the first time in eleven hundred years.

Odin (off): to the Hell of Lucifer.

Loki (off): hahahahahaha! Will you go to war against the Fallen, Odin? Ohhh, you have become senile, old man...

Page 5 panel 5

Fairly long shot. The slab of rock, to which Loki is bound. Loki on it, bound by the intestines of his son. Odin standing next to Him these dark figures; just slightly more than silhouettes in the darkness beneath the world.

Odin: no. No war. Lucifer has...abdicated. His domain lies empty: a protectorate of the dream-weaver. It could be ours for the grasping.

Loki: ahhh.

Page 5 panel 6

Same shot as before, but now the figures of Odin and Loki are vanishing, fading away into nothingness, into non-existence in that place. The rock slab remains solid. Odin and Loki are faint gray shapes.

Odin: I need you, Loki.

Loki: yes. Yes, you do. I am with you, then, Odin. For now.

Cap: and they are gone.

Page 5 panel 7

Bottom right-hand corner; this panel takes up the space of two Panels on an 8 panel grid. Sigyn sits by the rock slab, in the dark cavern, the bowl beside her. She rests her head in her arm: She's crying, devoid of function, suddenly undefined.

Cap: stripped of their function, his lovers wait, in the Cavern beneath the world.

Cap: the woman.

Cap: the snake.

Cap: waiting for him to return.

Page 6 panel 1

This is the splash page. We're in the Sandman's throne room. Sitting on the floor, on the bottom right of the panel, are Lucien and Cain. Lucien is a long beanpole of a character when he sits down these huge long legs stick up, so he's almost like a grasshopper (I'm exaggerating but his knees are probably slightly higher than his shoulders). His jaw has dropped. Cain, who he's sitting next to, has recovered his savoir faire following issue 22's total destruction of everything he felt he was, and looks a lot more like the original 1972 Wrightson model than he did before. He's raised a hand to his face in shock (he's sitting far more informally than Lucien. Lucien sits like someone who doesn't sit very often and isn't very good at it. Matthew the raven, the last of the triumvirate waiting for the Sandman to come back, has fluttered up into the air, startled. It's fluttering backwards, clumsily, a foot or so off the floor this is not an easy maneuver, and its feet are stuck out in front of it, its wings spread, its beak open. Basically give the impression with these three that the last thing they expected was the Sandman walking in on them, and this happened two seconds ago, and now they're completely dumbfounded. Okay, that takes care of the bottom right of the panel. Now slightly left of centre, down the middle of the page, walking towards us, about five feet away from them (and about five feet further away from us) comes the Sandman. He's looking broody, thoughtful, his mind on other things. His eyes are dark and blazing. He doesn't actually have his hands in his pockets, but we can't see his hands and arms, they're under the one piece robe, so he might as well have. He's not in a good mood and he's not in a bad mood. He's just very preoccupied. He isn't actually looking at the trio on the floor to the right to see what kind of response his words are having. He's looking straight ahead of him. The background is the clean marble lines and pillars of part of his throne room (which is, after all, a huge room, which goes on for a very long way). Behind him is an open door, through which he's obviously just walked. (You might want to put some kind of grotesque thingie, peering discreetly around the door at him, in astonishment.) Not a magic door, just the door to the Throne room. Lucien's in his suit, Cain's in his safari suit looking like he's stuck in the 70s. Matthew's nude, as always.

Cap (top left, copperplate): the dreaming

Sandman: I am back.

Matthew (Matthew lettering): arrwk?

Title: Season of Mists: Chapter Three.

Subtitle: in which Lucifer's parting gift attracts unwanted attention; and the Dream Lord receives unwelcome visitors.

Credits: Gaiman, Jones, Jones, Klein, Oliff, Peyer and Berger.

Credit: Sandman (logo) featuring characters created by Gaiman, Kieth and Dringenberg.

Page 7 panel 1

Six equal panels on this page. We're looking at the three astonished dream- things. Lucien, pulling himself together, Matthew, fluttering down gently onto Lucien's shoulder. Cain's at the edge of the panel. Lucien is talking. He looks surprised but nervous.

Lucien: err...did you win?

Page 7 panel 2

The Sandman in close-up, looking towards us. He looks pretty exhausted, thin, but very beautiful: his eyes are just dark pits, no stars shining in them.

Sandman: no.

Page 7 panel 3

Go in for a close-up on Matthew the raven: its beak slightly open, its beady eyes glinting. Its feathers are ruffled, and its head is slightly on one side.

Matthew: was there a fight? Did you get the woman you were looking for? Did Lucifer give you any trouble?

Page 7 panel 4

The Sandman, head to knees. He's standing a bit away from us, his back to us. He's turned his head so he's looking over his left shoulder (our left) at us. Do his face like you did it on the last page of Sandman

17, so it's almost a skull, the shadow beneath the nose covering the bottom of his face, so all we can see is the nose and cheekbones.

Sandman: no, no and no.

Page 7 panel 5

Cain, in close up. He's grinning his Cain grin: his beard two points coming off his chin, hair shooting backwards into two almost-horns, obviously completely recovered from his experiences with Lucifer. Perhaps he's leaning on one hand.

Cain: so what happened, Lord?

Page 7 panel 6

The Sandman is walking away from us he's about ten feet away from us, his back to us, his long cloak covering him from shoulder to toe. No background in this panel just the back view of this little black-cloaked Sandman figure, completely exhausted, walking off.

Sandman: I'll tell you later.

Page 8 panel 1

We're looking in close-up extreme close up at Thor. Real close-up this hairy face fills the panel; beard and hair go out of the panel, and in the centre of panel are these two staring eyes, and a nose, a moustache and, at bottom of panel, an open mouth. Thor looks in his mid-thirties: these staring eyes are glaring out at the reader, at us. Angry. This is not someone with a long fuse: it's a man who's very strong, not very bright, not very nice.

Cap (copperplate: top left): Asgard.

Thor: and you trust him?

Page 8 panel 2

Right: next panel pull back a way. Bottom left of panel, Thor is sitting on the floor, in profile, his hammer held in his lap. His hair is wild and tangled, his beard a mess, his hair long. He's muscled like Mr. Universe really muscled like someone who has muscle development to an obscene degree: this isn't muscles Like you see in comic books, Kelley: this is the revolting knotted overmuscling you see in body-building magazines. (You probably can't see much of that in this panel

more in the next.) He's dressed in a brown leather jerkin, brown leggings. The hammer's on his lap, as I said. On the right of panel, also in profile, is Odin, holding his staff, staring down with his good eye. The staff's probably mid-panel. Odin's in his hat. Oh, they're probably outside in Asgard, a desolate bare place of skeletal black trees.

Odin: no. I do not trust him, Thunder God. But I need him.

Odin: and I need you to keep him from betraying us all.

Page 8 panel 3

Now, we're looking from Thor's perspective up at Odin. Loki, now wearing clothes he's wearing a simple red jerkin and skirt is standing behind Odin perhaps peeking over his shoulder at us. He looks better than he did previously, a bit more like his own self.

Loki: but aren't you pleased to see me? It's been twelve hundred years, cousin.

Thor (off): I am no cousin of yours, Loki wolf's-father.

Page 8 panel 4

We're looking at Thor. He's stood up, is walking away from us: Now we can see the muscles these bare arms like hams coming out of the leather jerkin. He's holding the hammer. His face is In quarter profile.

Thor: and if you try anything, trickster, I will split your Skull. I will smash your bones. I think this whole affair is addle-headed. But I will harness my goats.

Page 8 panel 5

Large panel covering the whole of the bottom tier. Okay at the extreme left of panel we can see Asgard, or at least, part of the land: we can see a sheer cliff, and, at the top of the cliff, a few bare trees. Now, flying towards us are some huge and unpleasant-looking goats. The goats are dragging a chariot: in the chariot are Thor holding a whip, and driving the goats. Near the chariot on the right, is Loki, walking through the sky, Or at least, running through it beside them. Make this fairly impressive, Kelley. Now, if you want to, you can put Odin in the goat-cart; or, if you want to, you can have him riding Sleipnir, his horse: the problem with Sleipnir is that it has eight legs, and I haven't been able to get it work on any sketches that I've done -

the only way I can imagine it working is to do two horses
Superimposed on each other, as if it's moving really fast, and we've
got a double-image. Either have him riding it through the Sky, or have
him in Thor's chariot.

Thor: on, Tanngnost! On Tangrisni! To Dreamland!

Loki: aye! To Dreams!

Page 9 panel 1

First panel covers the whole of the top tier. It's a long shot Of a place we've never been before, Kelley: the Sandman's private quarters. It's huge and strange, and almost all white. In the bottom middle of the panel, the Sandman is coming up the stairs. A fairly small figure, with his back to us. The stairs are glass, and are just thin slabs - nothing connecting them together. There is also a huge art deco statue on each side of the stairs. His room is large - it's a whole floor of the dream palace - with huge windows. There are couches and objets d'art around - one of the objets d'art is a statue of a griffin, made of white marble. There's also a full-length mirror hanging in the middle of the room. Basically, just imagine that you were the Sandman, And imagine what kind of rooms you'd like: oddly enough they aren't dark and full of skulls and things - they're just large and airy - no walls, huge windows, very empty and unlived-in: The bric-a-brac that's accumulated is tasteful and art Nouveau/art deco in feel.

Cap (copperplate, top left): the Dreaming

Page 9 panel 2

The Sandman is standing in the centre of the room. He's thrust one hand deep into his pocket - or at least, he's thrust his hand under the cloak, into his jeans. He's standing near the mirror.

No dialogue.

Page 9 panel 3

Looking down from the Sandman's viewpoint. His white hand outstretched, palm up. On it is resting this huge black key - The one we saw last issue. The key to Hell.

No dialogue.

Page 9 panel 4

Heavy black panel border. We're looking at Lucifer, from last Issue, page 24: naked and blood-spattered and carefree, with the Mists behind him. He's handing us a key - handing it towards us. He's smiling at talking. Flashback - faded colours.

Sandman cap: "the key to Hell?"

Lucifer: exactly. It's yours, now. Perhaps it will destroy you, and perhaps it won't. But I doubt it will make your life any easier.

Page 9 panel 5

Close up on the Sandman's face. He's looking downwards. His lips are tight and drawn, his cheekbones high. His eyes are blazing In his head like little stars.

No dialogue.

Page 10 panel 1

Long panel across the top of the page. Medium shot: the Sandman is smashing the mirror with his right fist (the key is in his other hand). Make this a very kinetic shot - his arm outstretched, his hand a fist, his cloak whipped back by the forward motion. It's a gesture of complete and utter frustration. It's a full-length mirror and his fist is ramming straight into it. Shards of glass are flying out from it, from the point in the centre where he's punching it. The Sandman's on the left of panel, the mirror hangs in the centre. Make this a really cathartic, violent panel. The Sandman is, of course, completely unhurt and untouched by this. (Kids: the Sandman doesn't exist - you do. Don't try this at home.)

No dialogue.

Page 10 panel 2

The Sandman stands on left of panel, facing us. He's turned his back on the mirror. He's biting his lower lip. Behind him, on the right, we can see the mirror hanging: a spider's web pattern spreads out from the middle of the mirror, from where the Sandman thumped it.

No dialogue.

Page 10 panel 3

Same shot as the last panel: however, now the Sandman has raised his arm (the one on our right), and is gesturing with it. A nimbus of light is going from his hand, to the mirror, repairing it: the cracks and missing pieces of glass are now gone, or at least, are reforming.

No dialogue.

Page 10 panel 4

The Sandman has sat down on the floor, facing us - almost crumpled, although he's just sitting, disconsolate, on the floor. Behind him the mirror is perfectly repaired, if we can see it. He looks thin and lonely: his cloak has gone: he's just this man in black jeans and a black sweater, holding a key, sitting down. No panel border. No dialogue.

Page 10 panel 5

Last panel on the page. Okay, now swing around 90 degrees: the Sandman sitting on the floor. He's raised his hands to his face, and buried his head in his hands: he's completely upset, totally down. He feels let down, sad, exhausted, and finally, in privacy, he's collapsed. This might work best in almost (but not complete) silhouette, with a panel border framing him.

No dialogue.

Page 11

Okay, now what I want to do here is bring in Chaos and Order. Frankly not a concept I have much time for in the DC universe: It seems to be another way of talking about vaguely magic-ish gods, of whom the Lords of Order are splodgy shapes that sort of glow (not very orderly) and the Lords of Chaos are disembodied smiles (not particularly chaotic) - unless we're talking Hawk & Dove type titles, in which case Lords of Chaos and Order are good or bad magic gods, Order being a bit nicer than Chaos - straight out of Dungeons & Dragons. Up until now I've tended to simply avoid them (and slag them off in the Books of Magic). Now what I want to do here is actually play with the concept of Chaos and Order. So the page divides into a perfectly even six panel grid, of which the panels on the left are order - perfectly regular, perfectly drawn panels. The panels on the right are Chaos - strange, slightly fractal images. Now, the thing to concentrate on here is not actually drawing these pages, Kelley. It's finding the images, and photocopying them, enlarging them, reducing them, moving them on the photocopier (on the Chaos - not on Order) and sticking them down.

There? Does that make sense? It's basically abstract, setting Order against Chaos. (Although with what I can do on this computer, the Chaos is pretty orderly too.)

Page 11 panel 1

We're in a perfectly drawn panel border: inside are a set of regular images, of perfectly regular shapes - rods or rectangles. Like I say, look for a picture of mathematical shapes - Preferably computer generated, three dimensional regular shapes, and just photocopy them and stick them down. The images that begin in this panel continue into panels 3 and 5. Todd - The lettering should probably be typeset, or done on your computer/typewriter, preferably with a very slim and equal typeface. Do the square brackets, possibly even italicise the words in the brackets (which I haven't done) to indicate that we are filling these in in order to make sense of otherwise incomprehensible stuff - as if we're translating out of a very blocky language which consists chiefly of verbs and nouns.

Cap, top left, copperplate: Order.

gray caption: shift [has] occurred [in] [the] balance. Pristine domain [has] opened [up]. Hasty reaction [Is] needed.

White caption: [if this is true] what [do you] counsel?

Page 11 panel 2

Okay, the panels on the right have roughly drawn panel borders - very, very loose; maybe no real panel borders at all. The images within the panel are rough photocopies of computer-generated fractal designs. You may also want to experiment with moving the picture around as you photocopy it, to further distort what you get, until you get something strange, composed of unfamiliar blurred patterns. Todd - the lettering should be in various sizes and shapes - loose and rough, and different caption boxes Should be of different sizes - some of them, especially the strange sort of echoing effect can get quite small. Just cut loose and have fun with this. Steve - colour the caption boxes in bright colours.

Cap, copperplate, top left: Chaos.

Cap: a shift has occurred in the balance. A new domain has opened up. We need to act fast.

Cap: has opened up

Cap: so? St? Fast. Shift.

Cap: o? Suggest?

Cap: sugge

Page 11 panel 3

More regular shapes and images of complete and utter order.

gray caption: appoint [an] emissary: [the] Dream-King [is] vulnerable.
He [will] confer [on us] [what] [we] covet.

gray caption: there [is] much [we] [can] proffer [to him].

Black, reversed cap: who then [will] [be] ambassador?

Page 11 panel 4

More chaos. Todd, this panel is heavy on the lettering, but play around with different typefaces, and making bits of it fairly small. Play with it - don't worry too much about making sense, Since between the two sides of the page, it should make sense. If you see what I mean.

Cap: an envoy: the Nightmare-King is pliable. He will give us what we want. An envoy: the dream-lord is vulnerable. He will give us what we

Cap: there is much we can provide him.

Cap: what do you there is much we can offer him.

Cap: who then?

Cap: who then will envoy? Be our envoy? en will be Ouren will be our envoy? en will be our messenger? en will be our envoy? Envoy?

Page 11 panel 5

More regular shapes of complete and utter order, as in the two panels above it.

White cap: Kilderkin of Order.

gray cap: Kilderkin of Order?

Black, reversed cap: yes.

Page 11 panel 6

More images of photocopied distorted fractal chaos. Todd - try to get the impression here that some of these are just almost echoes, or other voices repeating bits of what's been said - that there's a sort of turbulent chaos in these three panels and we're picking out the most relevant bits.

Cap: shivering Jemmy.

Cap: of the shallow brigade?

Cap: Is he shallow brigade? Whe shallowl.

Cap: shivering.

Cap: Is he shallow brigade? Brigade? Allow brigade?

Cap: be our

Cap: of Chaos.

Cap: the same.

Cap: it is well.

Page 12 panel 1

Long panel across the top tier. Back with the Sandman a few hours Later. We're in a dark room. Okay - now he's dressed up the nines, wearing a rich and impressive sort of gear - full dress suit, ornamented and formal sort of cloak, the whole thing. He's in his gallery (see Sandman 16, the last episode of the Doll's House, page 21 for a glance at his gallery.) He's standing with his back to us, staring at the picture frames on the wall. In the first one is a book; in the second, an ankh; in the third, we can see the Sandman's face staring out at us; in the fourth - nothing: it's blank; in the fifth, a stylised heart...After that they go off to the right of panel. The Sandman is standing just beneath the ankh, looking up at it.

Cap, copperplate, top left: the dreaming

Page 12 panel 2

We're looking at the Sandman's hand and arm: he's holding the large silver ankh, which is glinting in the light.

Sandman: my sister. I stand in my gallery, and I hold your Sigil. Will you talk to me?

Page 12 panel 3

Death's face fills the panel - no background. Well, I'm sure you've drawn her plenty of times at conventions, Kelley, but this is your first chance to draw her in a real comic. This impish, almost elfin face, her hair a mess, eyes made up like in Sandman 8: in fact take Sandman 8 as your model for the character: dark hair, pale skin, dark eye make-up and lipstick. She's a darling. Problem is, she looks a bit rushed and harried, but for now, she's smiling her elfin smile and saying:

Death: hiya, big brother. What's happening?

But make it fast - I'm in kind of a hurry.

Page 12 panel 4

Okay - pull back. Now, the Sandman is standing in front of the picture frame. Only it's not a picture frame any more: it's a window, bordered by the picture frame. The Sandman is standing, holding the ankh, looking at death. She's leaning on the bottom edge of the frame, resting her elbows on it, resting her chin on her fists. She's looking out at the Sandman. The background (Death's background, that is) is daylight, with smoke drifting past her.

Sandman: my sister...Once, you berated me for not calling on you when I had a problem...

And now, I have another problem; and I am coming to you for advice.

Death: shoot.

Sandman: shoot?

Page 12 panel 5

We're looking at death - she's looking out at us from this picture frame, with, behind her, daylight and smoke - she's next to a burning building, or in a war zone, something like that.

Death: I mean, tell me what's wrong.

Sandman (off): mm. Shoot. Yes. I went to Hell, sister. To free the woman Nada...

Death: I know. You went to Hell, and you found Lucifer had turfed everyone out...

Page 13 panel 1

Long shot - the Sandman in his gallery, talking to Death. Do this from the side, in profile, so we can see a bit of death Leaning out of the window of her frame, and him standing next to it, looking slightly up at her. Maybe in silhouette.

Sandman: you know?

Death: of course I know. And he gave you Hell. The most desirable plot of psychic real estate in the whole order of created things, and it's now all yours.

Sandman: so what do you advise me to do?

Page 13 panel 2

Death. She looks irritated - no, not irritated. She's sort of Looking Heavenwards, with this "All the billions of brothers I could have had and I get this one." expression on her face: exasperated. Maybe one arm is actually coming out of the frame she's in, indicating that she is in the place behind the wall, but she's also there with him, if there was any doubt.

Death: do? How should I know? What do you want to do? Open a skiing resort? Turn it into a theme park? Sell it to the highest bidder? It's your choice. You've got the place. What do you want to do with it?

Page 13 panel 3

Looking down, from death's point of view, at the Sandman. He Looks up at us. He looks very young, very vulnerable. He's talking, shrugging his shoulders, opening his hands. He's out of his depth.

Sandman: I do not know.

Page 13 panel 4

Death is running a hand through her fringe. She's busy and she's tired and she's wrapping this conversation up. She's back inside her frame now, in the picture, and the background has gone blank. Her expression is friendly but businesslike and tired.

Death: you'll figure something out. And soon, I hope. Look, I have to run. There's a whole can of worms opened up here, and no-one else seems to be doing anything about it. I'm doing what I can...

Page 13 panel 5

We've pulled back. The picture frame is smaller, and death's face is just a vague image. (This whole story seems to be full of people fading away.) We can see the Sandman on the left of panel, his back to us, silhouetted, just shoulders and torso and shaggy hairdo.

Death (wiggly balloon arrow - she's getting fainter): But the dead are coming back, little brother.

Death: the dead are coming back.

Page 13 panel 6

The Sandman's arm and hand. He's replacing the ankh in the frame - now completely blank. We're just looking at this ankh being put back in the centre of the frame.

No dialogue.

Page 14 panel 1

Two equal-sized panels in this page. Okay, Kelley. You remember what you did with the gates of Hell? (Of course you do. How could you forget...) Well, what I want you to do here is the exact opposite. We're looking at a city hanging in the void. And it is beautiful. Don't think that kind of Argo City, bubble dome thing: instead this is a wonderful, magical place of towering silver spires: it's the city of the angels - not Heaven, not Paradise, but the place that was created for the angels to inhabit, at the dawn of time. It's outside of the universe (if that isn't a tautology). No stars twinkle in the void around it - we'll see its relationship to the universe on the next page. For now we're just looking at this beautiful city, from above, and, outside, nothingness. I'm not going to try to describe the city to you, Kelly: it's quite simply the most beautiful, elegant, clean, silver place you've ever imagined - awe inspiring in the same sense that the gates of Hell were; but while the gates of Hell inspired terror, this place inspires awe - a numinous feel. Somewhere perfect and simple. Go knock them dead.

Caption: far below the silver city the universe glitters and glistens, like a child's toy; from this vantage point galaxies coil and gleam like multicoloured jewels, distant nebulae flicker and pulse.

Caption: the silver city.

Caption: it cannot be visited.

Page 14 panel 2

Okay - now close up on the city. We can see now, the spires of the city - all the buildings are built going up like silver minarets and towers. And we can see - some near to us, some further away: angels. And they are beautiful. Now, Kelley, go get reference: if you're feeling energetic, you could get some pre-Raphaelite books, and look up some of the studies of Jane Morris (who was the model for many of the women and many of the men in Burne Jones, Rosetti et. al.'s work); if you're feeling lazy dig out your copy of Barry Smith's Red Nails and look at his drawings of Valeria (who he swiped from Jane Morris & the pre-Raphs) but you might as well dig out the original. All the angels have that same face - they look like they've been carved out of marble: perfect jawlines, perfect noses, perfect cheekbones: no eyes - Like statues they just have white spaces in their eyes, no pupils, no irises. White robes, wonderful, huge wings - all the angels we can see (and we can see hundreds of them - a couple large and close to us, more further away at different levels of the spires) are just waiting, completely motionless, completely still. Contemplating perfection.

Cap: the inhabitants of the city were created in the same breath as the city itself, in the darkness before time.

Cap: before the first dawn, the silver city was.

Cap: it is not paradise.

Cap: it is not heaven.

Cap: it is the silver city, that is not part of the order of created things.

Page 15 panel 1

Same page layout as the one before - two equal sized panels on this page. Okay - now we've continued our pan in. And we're looking at two angels - identical in every respect. They have spread their wings and have lifted off from their tower. The wingspan is huge, and a wonderful thing - these are winged beings: see if you can actually get a sense of wonder in here, Kelley - a sharp intake of breath on the reader's part. Really clean lines, uncluttered and simple.

Cap: the inhabitants of the city possess names, and identities. Perhaps they possess something we might recognise as free will; perhaps not.

Cap: now two of them take wing.

Cap: Duma: Angel of Silence.

Cap: Remiel: who is set over those who rise.

Cap: together they soar: abandon the silver city, abandon their contemplation.

Page 15 panel 2

Right - last panel I'm going to write tonight. I've smoked too many cigarettes, and Tom Waits is croaking about the night-life of New Orleans on the stereo. And it's 3:00 am, and it's been a long day. Also I have no idea about what we're going to see on Page 16, so it's a good time to stop. Okay. Real pull back here, Kelley. Top right-hand side of the panel we can see the silver city, floating in the void. Bottom left of panel is the universe - a rough ball of stars and galaxies, of darkness and light. Just imagine what the universe would look like if you could see it from a long way away. It looks like that. And between the two worlds, these two angels: each has its arms extended and palms together, like divers on the way down from the high board, each has its wings fully extended. The hair of each angel blows backward as if in a celestial wind. They almost mirror each other. Make this panel, like the three before it, simple and heart-stoppingly beautiful.

Cap: they fly together in perfect unison, shining wings bearing them effortlessly across the void.

Cap: two angels.

Cap: falling toward the world.

Page 16 panel 1

Over the page. Three panels on the top tier: this first panel is smallish, and has a border. It's blackness. And in the blackness float eyes and teeth - almost randomly: here's an eye, there's a mouth with sharp little teeth in it, below it another eye, next to it another mouth full of crooked teeth. The eyes and mouths seem like they belong to different people, although they're all roughly the same size in

relationship to each other - the eyes are eye-sized, the mouths are mouth sized. It's nasty, and scary and strange. It's Azazel.

Cap copperplate top left: Limbo.

Azazel (Todd - check Sandman 4, page 11 for his lettering): we are outcasts! We are exiles! We are the dispossessed! For too long have we been downtrodden. No longer! Brothers. Sisters. Others. All of us. At this moment, in this our trough of despair, it may seem like the greatest setback we have ever experienced.

Page 16 panel 2

Pull back: we're looking at Azazel, now. He's roughly man-sized: a rip in space, ragged-edged like Sandman's cloak at the beginning of Sandman 23, a dark hole in space filled with eyes and teeth. This is kind of spooky. It has two vaguely arm-like appendages at each side (each filled with its share of eyes and teeth). The background is empty, gray mist - we're in Limbo. Incidentally, Azazel floats a few feet off the ground. No panel border.

Azazel: but it is the greatest opportunity. Yesterday, we were creatures of Hell. Today we are homeless, banished to this dreary Limbo.

Azazel: but tomorrow - oh glorious tomorrow - tomorrow we shall have Hell again as our domain.

Page 16 panel 3

Okay, pull back a way. Azazel is now about twenty feet away from us. He's on the top of a hill. Panel border again.

Azazel: but this time will be different! No longer will we be in thrall to a fallen angel. No longer shall we be vassals of some shifting triumvirate.

Page 16 panel 4

Okay - big panel taking up the bottom half of the page. We can see that in this formless limbo, Azazel is on top of a hill. Clustered around the base of the hill are demons - demons of every shape and kind, evil, strange, unpleasant things of every shape, size, sex and type. Some punk, some in dinner suits, some naked, some incapable of wearing clothes. Go to Joel Peter Witkin for the feel of the thing, Kelley. The demons all have their backs to us. They're staring up at the jagged rip

in space that is Azazel - it's raised a pseudo-limb high in in a nazi-style salute. The demons are responding to this like any crowd swayed by a demagogue - cheering him on.

Azazel: this will be a new Hell. A forward-looking Hell, that recognises individual worth; in which a daemon can raise its head - or any other important member - high, and say:

"This is my land...and no-one is ever going to take it away from me again."

Demons: Azazel! Azazel! Azazel!

Page 17 panel 1

We are looking at Azazel again. Now - make sure that Azazel never has any shading: it's just blackness, a blackness filled with eyes and teeth, like a hole in the fabric of reality.

Azazel: today, I will go to the Dream-King, and I will demand he give us - return to us - the land that is rightfully ours.

And I will not go alone.

Page 17 panel 2

We are looking at the Merkin. There's a picture in the Witkin book called Amour - check it out. It shows a woman, with an animal skull on her head, with glass eyes in it. The skull is of no known animal (actually it's probably a dog-skull, it's just the way it's placed, with the teeth on top, and the glass eyes in the wrong holes that makes it look so bizarre and disturbing). She looks roughly like that. She isn't naked, either: she's wearing what looks like a very expensive evening dress, and evening dress-type shoulder-length gloves: this very sexy, expensive-looking body, with, above it, this nightmare head of bone and eye and tooth.

Azazel cap: "with me will go the Merkin - she whose womb spawns spiders. The Merkin has been my aide in war and peace."

Azazel cap: "she will be invaluable in convincing the dream master of the wisdom of our case."

Page 17 panel 3

Right - now remember the demon Choronzon? He's the demon with two mouths who was in Sandman 4. Now, first, take a look at that. (That's the one you copied for Sandman 22) then take a look at Sandman - P Mike Dringenberg's interpretation of the character. Now do your own take on Choronzon - this punk demon with wide eyes and two mouths full of sharp pointed teeth, one beneath the other, so that you can't quite focus on the face properly. He stands there, preening, dressed in a ripped tee shirt, stockings and garter-belt. He's grinning - both mouths. He also should have a new set of scars over his body, perhaps one down the side of his face: a legacy of his time with agony and ecstasy.

Azazel: and Choronzon - once a creature of Beelzebub's - and most foully betrayed by that shifty dupe of Lucifer. Now one of us...

Choronzon: until the end of time, Prince Azazel.

Page 17 panel 4

The three of them together now, on the hill, Azazel in the centre, the other two flanking him. There's something at their feet we'll be able to see properly in the next panel - for now it's just a shape in the shadows.

Azazel: the dream-creature will of course accede to our wishes. He must see that Hell is ours by right! He must return our lands to us.

But if he fails to see reason, we have something to help him make up his his mind.

Page 17 panel 5

Right - we're looking at the figure on the ground in front of the three demons. It's Nada - the first time we've seen her properly. No dreadlocks, Kelley. Basically she looks like she did in Sandman 9, only much thinner. She's laying on the ground - her hands are tied behind her with what looks like barbed wire; her feet are tied together at the ankles, again by barbed wire. She's bleeding a little. She's not crying - she's just staring out, wildly. She's naked. Make sure she's recognisable: a sixteen-year old black queen of an African civilisation ten thousand years gone.

Azazel: he is a reasonable being, after all.

And he will be willing to trade.

Azazel (small): isn't that right, little Miss Nada?

Page 18 panel 1

You know, I've just discovered the antidote to my continual worries about this issue (which has not been easy to write). I've started worrying about the next one, which has thrown the whole thing into a different perspective. Sigh. Anyway, we're opposite an ad page here. Seven panel grid, three on the top tier, four below: okay, panel 1. Now you remember Sandman 22, page 22, where you did the Sandman's castle in the sea? Right - now we're looking at the Sandman's castle again, but it's on top of what appears to be a hill, although the hill goes off at bottom of panel. The whole of the hilltop is covered by the fairy tale towers of the Sandman's castle. Flying toward us in the foreground is Matthew the raven.

Caption copperplate, top left: the Dreaming.

Page 18 panel 2

Okay, Kelley. Now we've pulled back about half a mile: what we can see now is that the Sandman's castle is on the top of a mountain - but a dream mountain, a Brian Froude mountain, which is practically just a twisted pillar of rock that goes straight up, tapering gradually, for quarter of a mile or more, and, at the top we can see the palace we saw in the last panel, now pretty small, but still just recognisable. And flying towards us still is Matthew the raven. Oh, and there's a winding path up the side of the mountain - often practically vertical.

No dialogue.

Page 18 panel 3

We're now away on the border between dream and nightmare, miles away from the centre of the dreaming, where the Sandman's castle is (actually it's a bit more complex than that: wherever the Sandman's castle happens to be is by definition the centre of the Dreaming, even though it moves around a lot). Matthew is, smallish, flying down towards a cave entrance that we can see half-way up a cliff-top. This is the dream-world - it's beautiful and quirky and strange, and, being on the edge of Nightmare, there's weird stuff around too. Possibly in the background distance we can see this skinny mountain with the Sandman's castle on the top sticking up into the clouds, a long way away.

Matthew: kaaark!

Eve? You there?

Page 18 panel 4

Next tier. At the bottom of the panel is Matthew, his back to us; coming out of the cave towards him is an old woman -- Eve: she's in her seventies, a little overweight, with shaggy white hair and a shapeless dress. She looks pleased to see him.

Eve: Matthew. Welcome back. What news?

Matthew: of the boss? Nothing really. He's still hiding out in his suite in the castle.

He won't talk to anyone. Not even me.

Eve: hmph. He's like a little child.

Page 18 panel 5

Similar shot. Eve has reached down her hand to Matthew, and he's hopping up onto it. She now looks about fifty: her gray hair is streaked with black, her face is less lined, her dress beginning to fill out. The cave entrance is the background. Eve's put her head slightly on one side, thoughtfully.

Matthew: oh - and he's moved the castle to the top of a mountain.

Eve: he's expecting unwelcome visitors, then. He only does that when he's feeling anti-social.

I'm sure this will sort itself out. These things usually do.

Page 18 panel 6

Similar shot, but a little closer in. Eve has brought Matthew up to the level of her breasts. She's holding him - really holding him, her two hands encircling his folded wings and body. His tail peeks out one end, his head comes out the other. She now looks about 35: her hair is all dark, her face relatively unlined, except at the eyes. She's talking, resignedly.

Matthew: I hope so. I've never seen him this out of it before.

Eve: no. But you have not been with us long, little raven. He gets black moods on him sometimes. Worse than this one sounds. Much worse.

Page 18 panel 7

Final panel on the page. Slim panel, silhouettes of, on one side, Matthew's head and beak, on the other, Eve's head. Both in profile. Eve now looks about 20.

Matthew: is there anything we can do?

Eve: of course, my darling. We can wait.

Page 19 panel 1

Okay. Back to the Sandman's rooms. The huge white apartments we saw earlier, marble pillars and occasional art deco designs. It's now in twilight - all the windows show is a dark grayness, no lamps are lit. The only real thing we can see to break the blank white monotony of the apartments - white carpets, walls, and steps, is the Sandman himself. He's sitting against a wall, his knees up around his chin, his arms around his lower legs. We probably can't see much of his face - it's resting on his knees. He's in the middle of a black depression. All he's wearing is a pair of black jeans, and a very ragged black tee-shirt, with holes in it. Bare feet. He's unshaven (which for the Sandman is more of a state of mind than a physical fact) - if that works. If not he just looks bad, thin and skull-like.

No dialogue.

Page 19 panel 2

We're looking at the statue of the griffin we saw earlier. It's a statue of a classical griffin, made of white marble, the griffin's feet on a pedestal. Don't do this griffin in the way you did the one in Sandman 18, Kelley: make it look like a classical griffin: feathered head, with ears, large beak, lion's body - check a good work of reference to get it exactly right. The beak is frozen open - the griffin statue is a statue. But a voice is coming from it.

Todd - make the word balloon slightly wavy, with a wavy arrow: The idea is that the voice of the griffin on the gate is coming out here.

Griffin: my lord?

Page 19 panel 3

The Sandman in medium close up, feet to head. He's still on the floor in the same position he was in before, sitting down with his hands clasped around his legs, bare feet. He's looked up, staring at us. He looks like a skull - not literally, but he looks very thin, and the dark areas that he has instead of eyes are large and his eyes are tiny dots within them. He doesn't look sad. He just looks blank, expressionless, but he also looks like someone who hasn't slept for two weeks (not that he does) nor eaten in three (quite possible, although he's only been back for a few days). His hair is even wilder than usual. He's talking.

Sandman: ...go away.

Page 19 panel 4

The griffin's carved marble head, with the beak frozen open, and a little light glinting off it. Actually it might look better - although be harder to draw - if the head was glass, not marble. But I'll leave that up to you.

Griffin: we have visitors. At the gate.

My lord, there are many of them.

Page 19 panel 5

Close up on the Sandman's face. Do one of those faces where all you can see is his cheekbones and nose - everything else is hidden by shadows.

Sandman: tell them...To go away. I am not...receiving visitors...at this time...

Page 20 panel 1

Smallish panel. The griffin statue. We're looking at the whole thing - it hasn't moved. Marble pylon, griffin, one foot on the base, one foot raised, like the classical heraldic pose.

Griffin: but they are envoys, my lord. I recognise a few of them. Some have been here before - as honoured guests.

Some of them are gods. All of them are puissant.

Page 20 panel 2

Larger panel, for the rest of the tier. The Sandman's stood up now. We've pulled back - on the left of panel is the griffin statue. It's about three feet high. The Sandman is standing at one end of the room, staring at it. He looks thin. His black tee shirt is ragged and torn. His jeans are filthy. He's barefoot. A voice is still emanating from the griffin statue.

Griffin: we gatekeepers cannot keep them all out, should they take it to force their way in.

Not unless you lend us power, lord.

Not unless you lend us strength...

Sandman: enough.

Page 20 panel 3

Three panels on the bottom tier. The Sandman has walked over to the griffin, so we're looking at them both in this panel. He's looking down at it. He looks terribly wasted.

Griffin: what shall we do, lord?

Page 20 panel 4

Same size panel. Close in on the Sandman's head and shoulders. He looks very alone. His eyes are black.

No dialogue.

Page 20 panel 5

Okay. Finish the zoom in on the Sandman. He's smiling - ever so slightly. One corner of his mouth has turned up. And there's a gleam in one eye.

Sandman (small): let them in.

Page 21 panel 1

Small panel: we're looking at Thor, in close-up, his eyes bulging, a vein in his forehead throbbing, his beard bristling. His face is red, and he's shouting:

Thor: ...Tell you again, if you do not open this fart-sucking door, then my hammer Mjollnir will smash it into toothpicks! Hah!

I am the mighty Thor!

Page 21 panel 2

The rest of the page - in effect, this is a splash page, Kelley. We're looking at the main gate of the dream castle. It's a huge wooden door, about 20 feet high, set into a rock wall, like the gate to an old fortress. The griffin is at the left of the gate, the wyvern around the top, and a winged horse (a hippogriff) on the right. The griffin and the horse are both on their hind legs; the wyvern coils around the top. These are the guardians of the gate. Don't do them like you did in that cat story - there they were real animals, arrayed around a cave: here they are creatures of myth, the guardians of the gate. Each of them is fifteen to twenty feet high.

We're looking down from above, and, standing in front of the gate, on a bare, rocky area, we can see a number of protagonists, with their backs to us. We're above all these people, looking down on them. We've met most of them before: even the tallest of them - and most of them are tall - are dwarfed by the door and its guardians. They are clustered together nervously, each in their own group: Azazel, the Merkin, Choronzon; Loki, Thor and Odin (these three in front of the gate), Thor brandishing his hammer, holding his goat-drawn chariot. The two angels hang in the air on the top right, gazing down soberly at the action. Anubis, and Bes and Bast stand in their little cluster, looking very Egyptian, as well they might; there's a tall bronzed man, with a bald head, earrings, and a loin cloth, like a character from the Arabian Nights, carrying a 2' high cardboard box; there's a little girl, her hair in pigtails, holding a balloon, in a clown suit, with a red clown's- nose on her face, and clown make-up; a sole Japanese samurai warrior-type, in ornamented clothes, with a bushy beard; and a small group of fairy folk. If you can't get all these in at this point, then don't push it - do as much as you can: don't crowd it. Do this fairly cleanly - like those Justice League pages where they bung lots of tiny people on. Oh, leave out the fairies - they'll turn up in Sandman 26, I think.

Griffin: I have spoken to my lord. He apologises for the delay, and bids you all welcome.

He will greet you in his throne room.

Enter, and announce yourselves.

Page 22 panel 1

Okay Kelley - four panel page, here, equal-sized panels, so just quarter the page. Throughout the next seven panels, the background stays exactly the same, so you may want to photocopy the background - or not, up to you. In the middle of this panel is Thor, a huge, bullying bruiser of a man, built like a brick shit-house, muscled like a blacksmith, with a shock of hair and a shock of beard, one fist clutching the end of his hammer, the other cupped around the head of the hammer. Odin is on his left, Loki on his right. Odin is talking. They have walked through the door, and are standing in the corridor inside.

Odin: I am Odin all-father, of the Aesir. With me are my son Thor, of the Aesir, and Loki sky walker - the child of giants, but Aesir by right of blood- brotherhood.

We seek the key to Hell.

Page 22 panel 2

Centre panel is Anubis, shoulder and head. Flanking him and behind him are the goddess Bast - the cat-headed goddess, and Bes. The description I found of him reads "he is usually depicted as a dwarf with a large bearded face, shaggy eyebrows, long hair, large projecting ears, a flat nose and a protruding tongue. His arms are long and thick, his legs bowed, and he wears a tail. He was probably of nubian origin. unlike the other Egyptian deities, who in two dimensional pictures were always shown in profile, Bes appears full-face.... He was a genial figure and a guardian against misfortune. He slew snakes, protected children, encouraged human fertility, and assisted the hippopotamus goddess Tawert in childbirth." So that's what Bes is like.

Todd - can you use the Egyptian lettering you did in Sandman 20?

Anubis: I am Anubis, Lord of the Dead of the Nile delta. With me are Bast, Lady of Cats, and Bes, a household deity.

We seek the grant of the Hell that was once Lucifer's.

Page 22 panel 3

We are looking at a wild-eyed, richly dressed, wild-haired, black-bearded, Japanese god. Again, seek out some reference on this, Kelley. By his side hangs a huge sword. He is proclaiming himself.

Todd, I don't know if you can do an easy-to read Japanesey lettering at this size. Maybe just a few capitals?

Susano: to his shame, this one is Susano-O-No-Mikoto, 'his brave swift impetuous male augustness', son of Izanagi, 'his augustness the male who invites'. This one comes alone.

There is a discussion that might be had at some point, concerning territory.

Page 22 panel 4

Azazel is centre, flanked by Choronzon and the Merkin. They look as they did when last we saw them, although Choronzon is now wearing evening dress, with a rose in his buttonhole.

Azazel: I am Azazel, formerly a prince of Hell. With me are the Merkin, Mother of Spiders, and Choronzon, once a duke of the Eighth Circle.

We seek the return of our lands.

Page 23 panel 1

Same background. The huge oiled bald guy who looks like a genie (I have to do something with genies in Sandman one day), holding a cardboard box in his be- ringed hands.

Slave of the box: I have the honour to be the personal slave of Lord Kilderkin, a manifestation of Order, here incarnated for us in the form of this cardboard box.

He, too, wishes to discuss the disposal of the realm that was once Lucifer's.

Page 23 panel 2

Okay. Now walking toward us through the corridor - toddling toward us more like it, is a small girl, no older than four. Her face is made up like a clown's, and she has a clown's red nose on. She's dressed in something that's much too large for her so it's hard to see what it is, really - a dress or something, or even an oversized pillowcase with holes cut in it at the top for her head and arms to poke out through. It drags on the floor and hides her feet - get the feeling you do when tiny kids dress up in adult dressing-up clothes. She's holding a red balloon. She looks small and vulnerable and sort of cute.

Jem: I is Shivering Jemmy of the shallow brigade, and I is a Princess of Chaos, and I is very important, and we wants Hell too.

That's what.

Page 23 panel 3

The angels, their wings folded behind them, glide sedately toward us, a few feet above the ground (there's no way they would soil themselves by touching the ground - even dream ground). They both look sober and solemn. Minimal lines on these Kelley - real Mobius-type characters, if you see what I mean. Pale, wonderful, beautiful creatures, floating side-by-side together down the corridor toward us. Each has its hands clasped in front of it, eyes in front of it. One of them has opened its mouth slightly, and is talking. Todd - something elegant and formal please. Possibly Lucifer' style.

Remiel: I am the angel Remiel, set over those that rise. My companion is Duma, Angel of Silence.

We are here to observe.

Page 23 panel 4

We are now looking down the corridor toward the other end - looking at the door to the Sandman's throne room. It's opening. Make the door look very different to the door to the castle.

Sandman (in room, out of sight): you are all welcome. Enter.

Page 24 panel 1

Hurrah! We've reached the last page. Actually I've quite enjoyed the last eight pages of script. It's been sort of fun - if only because by the time I got through the demons it was clear how the rest of it would go. Anyway, one large panel takes up the top half of the page. On the left of panel is the Sandman. He looks completely different to how he looked the last time we saw him a couple of pages ago. He's pulled himself together - necessity, and the need to put on a brave public face, have forced him to get it together and fast. He's wearing the most expensive looking robes he's ever worn - jet black, with stars twinkling in the lower part of the robe; huge sleeves, which fall diagonally from his outstretched arms. His hair looks great, and his face is thin but composed and very good-looking - killer cheekbones and dark eyes. He's standing straight, on a small dais, his arms raised at his sides. He has a chain around his neck - large silver links, with,

on the end of it, the key to Hell, laying on his chest. He's talking. The gods and visitors (who are a few feet below him), are clustering in from the right of panel - put in whichever ones you want to draw, I have no preferences. But they're all staring at him. Basically the main focus of interest here is the Sandman, looking absolutely fantastic. Make his hair longer at the back, Kelly, so it goes about a foot back down between his shoulder blades (I'm sure we can't see that here, but it changes the weight of the hair in front) and shorten the hair.

In the front, so we don't get that sort of porcupine-fringe effect in the front. He looks like royalty. Better than that, he looks like goddamn royalty. I suppose the way I think of him is looking like less like a Kelley Jones character and more like a Neal Adams character circa 1972 - tremendous presence.

Sandman: I welcome you to the heart of the Dreaming. I extend my hospitality to you all.

Suites for you are being prepared, and your wishes regarding nourishment and recreation will be catered for, insofar as we are able to provide.

Page 24 panel 2

Move in on the Sandman, who holds out the key around his neck, with his hand. He doesn't look at it, however - he's probably holding it about a foot out from his chest, and over on the left, around shoulder height, at the extense of the chain. He's staring down at his visitors, looking totally in control of the situation, charismatic, and smart. He's permitting himself a humourless grin.

Sandman: you all - or almost all - seek the same thing: this key, and all it represents.

The empty Hell that once was Lucifer's.

Sandman: but you have all journeyed far to come here this day.

Page 24 panel 3

Slim panel: close in on the key to Hell. This weird key, held in the Sandman's pale fingers. Red flames seem to flicker around it.

Sandman (off): you will be shown to your rooms. Tonight there will be a banquet, for you, and for any others who may be arrive betimes.

And tomorrow...

Page 24 panel 4

Okay. Now close in on this mister cool Sandman. Kelley. Don't define his face with shadows on this final page define it with fine lines, as fine and sparse as you can. He's cool as Hell, and almost-smiling, totally mirthlessly.

Sandman: we'll talk.

Then, copperplate: to be continued.

That's almost it, other than to mention that the 'next issue' box in the letters column should state that we won't find out any more about the events taking place in the dream world until issue 26. Next issue, we'll find out what's happening on earth. Where the dead are coming back.

[Section about next few issues cut here. ng]

There we go.

Hope you like it,

Neil.